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## EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

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### TEACHERS' UNIONS IN CHICAGO

On August 23 the Rules Committee of the Board of Education passed a resolution forbidding membership in teachers' unions. Teachers are given three months to discontinue their membership. They must state in writing that they are not members of any such prohibited organization and will not become members while they are employed in Chicago. No teacher refusing to make such a statement shall be eligible for promotion or for advancement in salary; any teacher found guilty of violating the prohibitory rules will be liable to a fine, to suspension from service, or to dismissal, at the discretion of the Board. On September 1, the Board by the close vote of 11 to 9 passed the resolution as recommended by the Rules Committee.

To meet this interesting situation the opposing sides have lined up their forces. The Chicago Federation of Labor, reinforced by President Gompers of the National Federation, has rallied to the support of the teachers' union. Other associations of teachers, not the immediate subjects of the Board's displeasure, have joined forces with the party bearing the brunt of the attack. In the meantime appeals to Mayor Thompson have been made only to meet with a short rebuff. Mayor Thompson vigorously resents some of the efforts that have been made by union leaders to influence votes on school affairs, even upon the floor of the City Council. He seems definitely to have lined up with the opposition; while Superintendent Young backs the other side.

It was rumored that the teachers would strike and prevent the opening of the schools in September. However, better counsels seem to have prevailed, and one party to the controversy at least seems to have put the welfare of the school population above factional squabbles. Certain teachers slated for promotion have resigned from the Federation; having done so, it is reported, under the advice of attorneys for the union. In the near future the Mayor is to replace seven members of the Board whose terms expired in July. Rumors that Mrs. Young will resign are again in the air. This entire situation, added to the investigations of the school situation by three different state and city committees, is indicative of a state of affairs which is a disgrace. Religious differences,

political enmities, and personal quarrels are continually thrusting themselves into the management of the schools. A grand hubbub of strife is always with us.

The right of a body of teachers to form a federation for mutual professional interests may be conceded. But the right of the officials of such an organization to affiliate with federations of labor, to lobby on the floor of the City Council, to threaten and to attempt to coerce members of the School Board is entirely a different matter. It is obvious that the city of Chicago could not allow unions among its employees to dictate the terms of their labor or of their wages. The officers of the government must be free from interference of labor agitators. A pertinent illustration is found in the entire absence of unionism among employees of the federal government. In short, militant unionism among workmen, when the opposing party is a private concern with private capital, may be justifiable. That is, for the immediate, beside the point. Militant unionism on the part of employees, when the opposing party is the public, represented by officials duly elected or appointed, is utterly intolerable.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Board of Education will be firm enough to compel the abandonment of methods of agitation used in the past, methods in all probability not sanctioned by the rank and file of the teachers, but methods which are dear to the hearts of the labor-agitator type of officers, who unfortunately have been of late years directing the activities of the Chicago Federation of Teachers. It is to be hoped, however, that the city authorities will recognize that there is a distinct sphere within which teachers' unions can work to the great advantage of the schools.

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#### RESEARCH AND TEACHING EFFICIENCY

The report of the University of Wisconsin survey contains answers to 21 questions by 57 educators on the effect of various sorts of research on teaching efficiency. These answers came from college presidents, deans, professors, magazine editors, administrators in public service, and other supervisors of research. While sharp differences of opinion upon the main issue are evident, the preponderance of opinion seems to be in the affirmative: research work does promote teaching efficiency. However, it must be remembered that the report is frankly nothing more than opinion; moreover it is the opinion of men most of whom are themselves interested in research, and many of whom feel called upon

to defend research against what they consider unjustified attacks. On the whole, the report gives very little real information upon the vital issue. One question was: What verifiable evidence has been collected to show how research affects quality of university or college instruction? Of 37 answering, 22 said they knew of no such evidence; and most of the others replied that the only available evidence consisted of opinion and of comparative judgment.

The survey, then, leaves the question about as it was, and as it will remain, unanswered and unanswerable. The truth is that no dogmatic answer, yes or no, is possible. Certain generalizations, large enough to be safe, will have to guide the thinking of those who direct college and university teachers.

The first is that what constitutes teaching efficiency for junior-college students by no means constitutes efficiency for graduate students. In every university there are men who make for differing classes no distinction in methods; some teachers of graduates never rise above undergraduate methods; and, alas, too many teachers of undergraduates, primarily interested in their own research and in their graduate students, foist graduate methods upon junior-college students. It seems to follow that administrators must find some means of determining what men have this power of adaptation; or of compelling all teachers who work with both groups of students to spend more time and effort in modifying their methods of teaching, for one or for the other of the groups. A happy alternative, one toward which all universities, at least, are optimistically aiming, is to relieve men of marked ability from the necessity of earning their daily bread by teaching undergraduates in whom their interest is remote. Professorships endowed for research are greatly to be desired.

But the large majority of students are undergraduates who need carefully organized, definitely blocked-out courses. Their work needs to be intimately supervised by teachers who are primarily interested, for the time being at least, in the personality of the students, and secondarily in the subject-matter of their courses. Nothing but the most conscientious preparation for his own teaching, for each class, for each class period, will suffice. Observation of university teachers tends to show that, on the whole, they are unwilling to give the time and effort required for this careful preparation. The result is the wretched teaching which is often found in the classrooms of the most highly paid and most distinguished in the field of scholarship—college professors.

Of course the careful preparation demanded will take time which to many teachers might be more pleasantly spent in library or in laboratory, preparing this or that article for learned societies or for publication. Nevertheless, the time must be spent. It must not be grudgingly stolen from the teacher's private interests; it must be freely and generously expended. And the conscientious teacher of undergraduates, who by the very bigness of his interest in his profession can for the time, relax his selfish interests—he must be compensated. His compensation is in frequent periods of relief from all teaching, say two days a week; say three months a year. In no other profession are there such abundant leisure periods set aside for activities outside of routine duties. The college or university professor who says he hasn't time to teach undergraduates as he should, and at the same time do sufficient research in his field, is not telling the truth. He means that he will not take time!

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#### HIGH-SCHOOL ALGEBRA

Commissioner Snedden of Massachusetts thinks that in a discussion of mathematics in secondary education the following points deserve first consideration:

1. The controlling educational purposes to be served by the study of algebra in secondary schools should be definitely formulated.
2. It should be determined how far given organizations of the materials of algebra, or given methods of teaching, result in their realization by pupils taking the study.
3. More specifically he inquires why girls in high school should be required to take algebra, and why women seeking admission to college should be required to present algebra for entrance.
4. For the young man who expects to follow medicine, law, journalism, or theology a good knowledge of algebra is not essential.

Dr. Snedden recommends that algebra be made elective for graduation and admission to college, and that a culture course in mathematics be worked out for students seeking to inform themselves about the world in which they live. Such a course will lead students to appreciate the place of mathematics without attempting to make mathematicians of them.

A committee of The Association of Teachers of Mathematics in New England has published a reply in which certain points are answered as follows:

1. Algebra is a means of expression for abstract thought, thus making accessible in the only possible way a large part of activity of the intellect.

2. There is a conflicting testimony as to how far different organizations of materials of algebra, or different methods of teaching, result in the realization of this purpose.

3. The "culture course" proposed by Dr. Snedden is not considered likely to be a success, unless preceded by an extended study of algebra and geometry. Instead, the committee favors, for graduation, a minimum in mathematics consisting of a one-year course in elementary algebra and geometry of a concrete sort, designed so far as possible to test the pupil's qualifications for future mathematical study.

Dr. Snedden's interesting letter and the reply of the committee deserve most careful study. The letter differs from most criticisms of mathematics because it is constructive rather than destructive. Less conservatism on the part of the friends of mathematics and more constructive criticism by those who oppose it will help to bring about a more thorough reorganization of the body of secondary-school mathematics. The problems demonstrating to what extent the purposes of mathematics are important for all pupils; of testing how far different organizations of the materials of mathematics, or the different methods of teaching, realize the purposes of mathematics; the problem of improving mathematical textbooks and mathematical teaching, are worthy of time and serious efforts of both students of psychology and teachers of mathematics. However, in the absence of lack of knowledge as to the answers to the questions raised by Dr. Snedden, it seems unwise to make mathematics elective for graduation from the general high school. The committee's recommendation of a "one-year course in elementary algebra and geometry of a concrete sort, designed so far as possible to test the pupil's qualifications for future mathematical study," is excellent. It will insure that no pupil is robbed of the opportunity to get a glimpse into this field, usually considered valuable, without working a hardship upon a large number of pupils. The few pupils who have tried faithfully, but cannot complete successfully this course and who do good work in other subjects should certainly be permitted to graduate without mathematics. The number of such students can be greatly reduced by better organization of the material for teaching, by better modes of helping students to study, and by giving more time of the class period to supervised study.

The committee's statement of the controlling purpose of algebra is hardly adequate. Algebra is more than a language. It is a tool, or

technique for thinking quantitatively, more than a mere means of expression. It is an organized agency of quantitative thought, an engine of exact analysis, as well as an expression.

One of the main reasons why the purposes of algebra are not realized for a large number of students is the fact that, as Dr. Snedden says, it is often taught by the teacher with the least preparation. It is not surprising that, under these conditions, success is only apparent and results are unsatisfactory. Before arguing that mathematics be made elective, we should exert our efforts in improving the quality of the teaching, at least until something has been found that has been demonstrated to accomplish the same purposes in a superior way.

E. R. BRESLICH<sup>1</sup>

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#### THE JOHNS HOPKINS COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS

Another step toward the creation of a teachers' college in Baltimore was taken in the recent creation of the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education, by the Johns Hopkins University. This marks a partial fulfilment of the hopes of the university which have been entertained for a number of years. As early as 1910, the university announced its desire of establishing a department for the higher training of teachers as an organic part of the university.

The curriculum leading to the new degree will be based on the college courses for teachers and the summer courses. The former, which were established in 1909, are conducted during the regular session in the afternoons and on Saturdays. The latter have been conducted since 1911. The new degree will be open to men and women on equal terms. The regulations concerning matriculation and the curriculum will be determined by a special advisory committee of the faculty. The title of Director of these courses has been assigned to Professor Edward F. Buchner, who organized and has conducted both of these branches of the university's activities.

<sup>1</sup> See article by E. R. Breslich, *School Review*, XX, 505-15.—EDITOR.